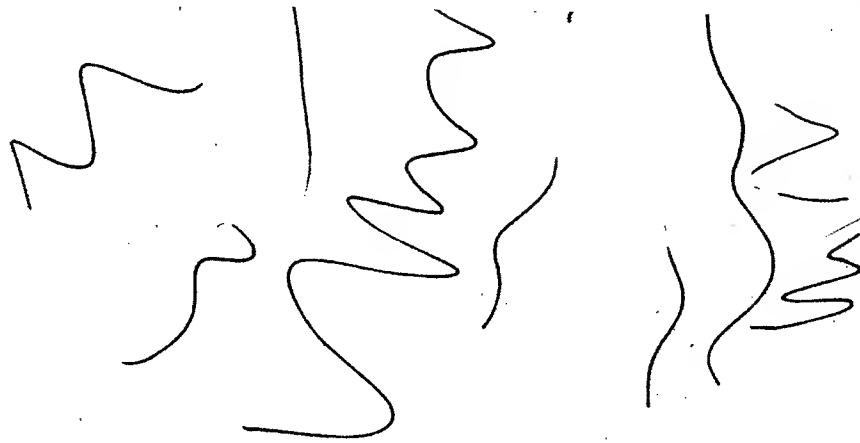




The Prince Capades



The fairy prince is looking for a new meadow, again. Ze has been chased out of yet another family meadow for dancing too loudly and encouraging the flowers to grow too brightly. Ze comes from a long line of rather boring and staid fairies that pride themselves on their perfectly ordered and color coordinated flower meadows. The fairy prince, Capsella does not like these boring and bland meadows and so does hir own dancing, upsetting the Grecian orderliness of hir parent's and relative's meadows. But this time ze went too far: dancing the begonia to a ridiculously loud color of orange and dancing the lilies beside it to a bright fuscia with over-flowing scent. This was too much. Capsella had to go. So all the boring fairies got up (for the most exciting moment of their lives) and chased Capsella out of the meadow for the last time. The fairy prince was sad that the other fairies were so jealous of hir dancing abilities and wild color combos that they had to kick hir out, but was not at all sorry to be out and dancing free. The fairy prince decided to go south, for as ze picked up and flew out of the last family meadow a brightly colored bird flew overhead singing a song about going south.



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The fairy prince was a handsome fairy, with small frame and eyes which seemed too big for his face. When the prince moved it was quickly, with a clumsy grace that had him standing on one foot then shifting to another before he fell over. It was nearly comical to watch except the one got the feeling that everything the fairy prince did was either absolutely planned or totally involuntary.

At first Capsella flew slowly, drifting over the tree tops. As he got further away and started to see new forests he got more and more excited until he was zipping and skipping and turning wheels and barrel rolls up and over the trees and down zooming through the bushes. He saw many meadows but did not stop. They were never quite bright enough or delightful enough and most reminded him of the boring meadows of home. He became lost in his game of climbing to the treetops and diving down to the bushes until suddenly a bright swirl far below caught his eye and he flew straight down into the middle of the tiniest, most delightful and colorful meadow he had ever seen. It had so many kinds of flowers that he began to dance immediately.



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Capsella danced from flower to flower, first slowly and carefully like the butterflies, and then more quickly and softly like the bumble bees, then even faster like the honey bees and then wildly like the flies. And then ecstatically doing hir own special dance which zoomed from flower to flower pausing to do a twirl here and then bouncing from leaf to leaf. The fairy prince was so happy and the meadow was so nice that a whole new kind of dance came out of hir; ze was dancing steps that had never been danced before. The meadow responded with music of its own, and the flowers started to swirl and dance right along with the prince. Soon a shimmer of meadow dance glittered out behind Capsella. The fairy prince and the meadow were dancing together.

High above the elf prince, guardian of this forest, watched. Ze was entranced because ze has never seen anything like the fairy prince before and thought: "this must be a very special being." The elf prince watched the fairy prince dancing and worked hir way down the tree, inching closer and closer to get a better look at the strange creature.



The elf prince had lived in the forest for nearly all hir life, apart

from a few short adventures, and was very tall and dark, like the trees surrounding hir. Abies had strong, handsome features like a clear young fir tree. When the elf prince moved it was with a quite, slow grace, deliberate and measured. But as the occasion called Abies could be very quick indeed, zipping from branch to branch like a squirrel. The elf prince sometimes blended into the trees so well they were indistinguishable. They were ancient relatives and took care of each other as such.

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The elf prince snuck down the tree so quietly even the birds didn't notice him going by. Before the elf prince realized what had happened he was standing at the edge of the meadow nearly in full view, staring at the fairy prince. The fairy prince turned around to see an odd little creature standing at the edge of the meadow, staring with its mouth open. (Of course, the fairy prince didn't realize that he was also staring with his mouth open.) The two princes stared at each other for a moment and then started edging closer. The meadow kept dancing its meadow dance and soon the whole meadow was swirling around the two princes while they moved closer and closer. Suddenly they were standing quite close, neither of them realizing how close, until their hands of their own will reached out to touch. At the touch both sprang back to the outside edges of the meadow and stared again, both in shock that they had gotten so close and both drawn to the creature on the other side of the meadow.

Somehow they both began to move forward without noticing, until they were again face to face, noses almost touching. The sounds of the meadow swirled around them as a bird sang overhead. The sound broke them out of their trance, and they shouted and took a step

back to stare up at the bird. They stared hard and soon they were flying with the bird; diving for moths and sweeping back towards the nest (neither noticed that the fairy prince had gathered the elf prince in his arms and was flying them both on this journey.) They landed next to the nest and collapsed on to a nearby branch. They watched as the bird fed its little ones. Suddenly the bird flew off and they nearly fell off the branch when they realized they were no longer in the meadow. The elf prince was quite surprised to have been in the fairy prince's arms (and was still there, confused and strangely comfortable) and the fairy prince was amazed that he had actually carried this creature all the way up into the tree. That kind of thing had never happened to him before. (Of course, meadows had never swirled and disappeared before either...)

This was the beginning of the fairy prince and the elf prince's adventures together. They spent many days exploring the elf prince's home. The fairy prince tried to teach the elf prince to dance the flowers and the elf prince tried to teach the fairy prince how to stalk the wild asparagus. They were both happy for the first time in their lives.

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One day, while looking at the far edge of a forest for a new meadow to dance in, the pair found a distressing scene. A huge tree had fallen down into the middle of the meadow, and was gasping its last breaths, turning brown and charcoaled. The meadow underneath was gouged and scarred by deep marks, from what ever had pulled down the tree. The trees and ground around where the old tree lived were toasted black, a visible scar. The elf prince reached down to touch the fallen, dying tree to speak with it and find out what had happen. As Abies touched the tree ze screamed in pain as hir hand turned black and got stuck to the tree. The elf prince screamed in agony while the fairy prince struggled to free hir. At last they were both freed and the elf prince collapsed next to the tree in a deep coma. The fairy prince, crisped and burnt as well, carried the elf prince back to their nest.

The fairy prince stayed by Abies' side, trying dance after dance to heal hir. The trees bent closer and gently swayed to calm the princes. At last the old squirrel came with a leaf full cooling mountain mud and they rubbed it on to Abies. Hir breathing slowed and ze

began to sleep calmly. (The old squirrel rubbed a little on the fairy prince as well, who didn't notice.)

The next morning the elf prince rose to see Capsella's worried face next to hir's. Abies stretched and found everything ok, but stiff and sore. The whole forest breathed a sigh of relief. Once the elf prince had gotten hir strength back the pair set off again to the meadow, to find the cause of the old tree's demise and to make sure no one else was suffering its fate. The whole forest rustled with ill tidings and mourned the loss of the old tree which had died in the meadow.

When the princes arrived at the meadow they heard a strange sound humming overhead and saw opossum high up in the tree next to where the old one had stood. It had a strange creature sitting on its shoulder and whispering things in its ears. The creature looked almost like a fairy, only much smaller, with a frightening head which had no eyes or expression, but gave the feeling that it would really like to consume you and spit out your remains.

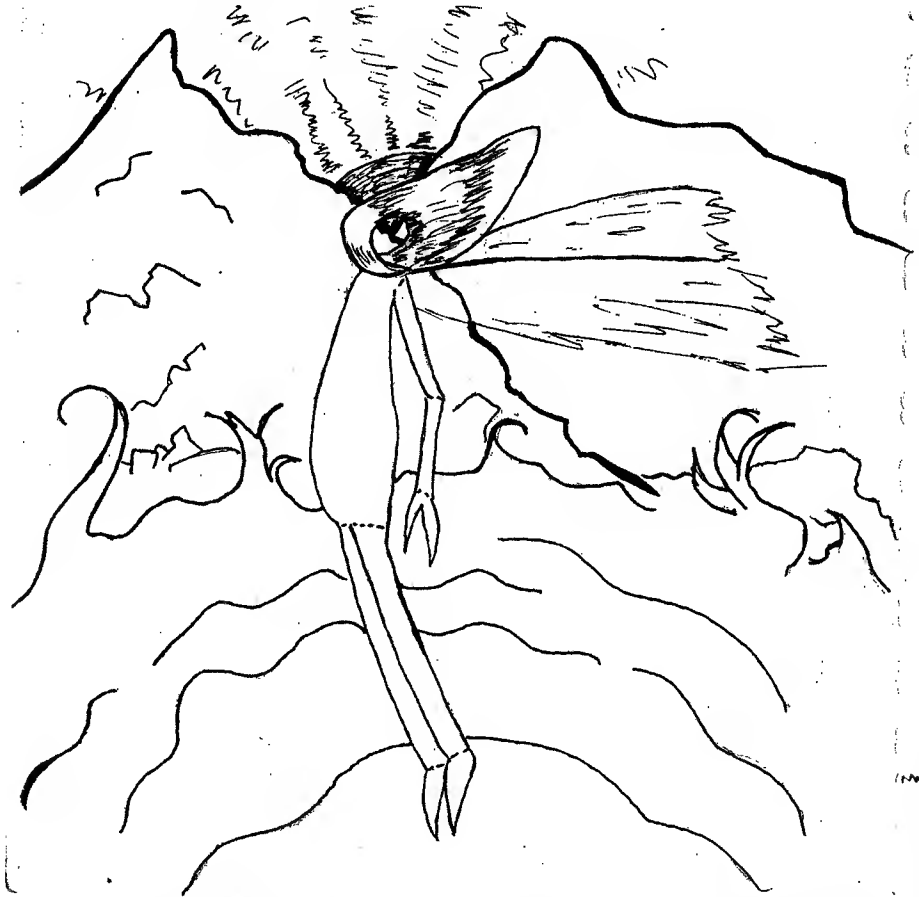
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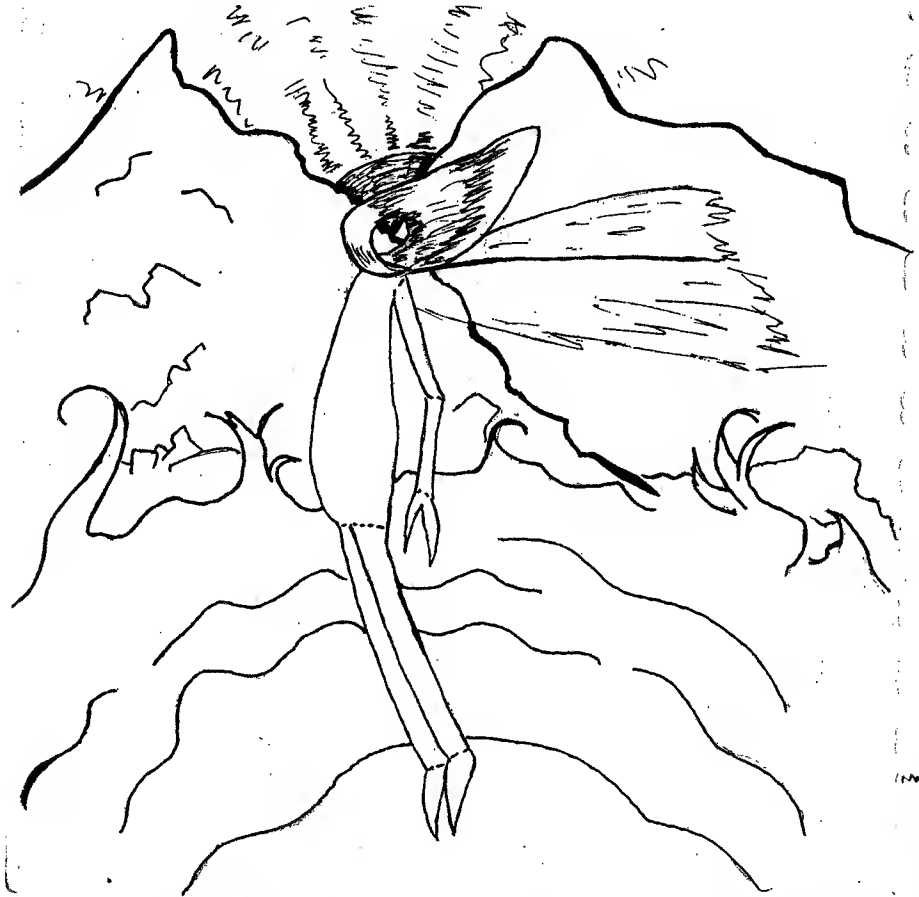
The two princes approached opossum warily. When they got near the bottom of opossum's tree he said, in a strange voice: "I am ego the mosquito and if you would like to know what happened to the tree I will tell you." The strange creature was latched on to opossum's ear and was fiercely whispering into it. The elf prince said: "that tree was my friend; please tell me what happened to it." Opossum looked ill for a moment, struggling, and then replied: "Opossum burned it down because it was blocking his view of the meadow, where his children played. He didn't have the nerve to do it himself so I helped."

"But who are you?" replied Abies, "that tree didn't deserve to die!" Opossum tried to run away but the creature held it tighter. "No, no prince, opossum deserves his view much more than that tree deserved to live, I can assure you, opossum is much better. Ha, ha, ha, ha! Just as I am much better than you little princes, for I am Ego the Mosquito! Your forest will be mine whenever I desire it. But I have business to attend at home." With that Ego the Mosquito opened a strange door in the side of opossum's tree and disappeared. The Elf prince shouted after it "This forest will never let you turn it into something as awful as you!" Opossum collapsed and looked ill, hiding its scorched paws into its pocket. The princes rushed to opossum, but it was too late and opossum fell into a coma.

The princes knew that they must follow Ego and find out where it went before more damage happened to their beloved forest. So they went back to their nest to discuss what to do.

To be continued....

At the Puppet Show!!!



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